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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iraq: Abu Azzam Assassination
- Al-Zarqawi Tapes- NATO's Training Mission Iran Bush -
Environmental Policy
PARIS - Wednesday, September 28, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iraq: Abu Azzam Assassination - Al-Zarqawi Tapes- NATO's
Training Mission
Iran
Bush - Environmental Policy

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Domestic social and economic news are today's main stories,
with a tense labor stand-off involving the Minister of
Transportation Dominique Perben and a state-owned Corsican
ferry service over the government's plans to privatize the
company. The Minister's backtracking under pressure from the
unions is also noted in Le Parisien as one of three examples
jarring the government this week, with the other two ministers
in the line of fire being Interior Minister Sarkozy and
Justice Minister Clement. PM Villepin is announcing the
government's budget for 2006, his first, under "constraints"
according to La Tribune and with "little margin of maneuver."

The assassination in Iraq of Abu Azzam, Al-Qaeda's number two
man is featured on the front page of Le Figaro. France Soir
titles its report "Al-Qaeda Loses One of Its Heads" but notes:
"a small consolation for the U.S. because assassinated
terrorist leaders are soon replaced." The Iranian conflict is
reported in Le Figaro in connection with Tehran's threats of
"shutting off oil production" and its capacity for "turning
Iraq into hell for the GIs." (See Part C)

Liberation reports on George Bush's calls for fuel
conservation by Americans in the aftermath of Katrina and Rita
in a story titled: "Bush, the Ecologist of Circumstance." (See
Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iraq: Abu Azzam Assassination - Al-Zarqawi Tapes - NATO
Training Mission

"Al-Qaeda Loses One of Its Heads"

Right-of center France Soir (09/28): "The death of Abu Azzam
was announced as the Iraqi rebellion continues to suffer
losses. and reprisal attacks are being mounted. Under the
circumstances, the death of Abu Azzam is a meager consolation
for the U.S. because Al-Qaeda is very quick to replace its
leaders fallen in 'combat.' But the Pentagon believes that the
replacement will be 'less qualified.' Meanwhile, the U.S. Army
continues to be under fire after the Human Rights Watch
report."

"Death of Al-Qaeda's Number Two Man"

George Malbrunot in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/28): "The
neutralization of Abu Azzam come at a crucial time, just when
Americans continue to show their opposition to the U.S.
military deployment in Iraq. But what impact, if any, will
this assassination have on the terrorist network? Previous
assassinations or the capture of key figures did not produce
the desired effect because the neutralized terrorists were
quickly replaced."

"Al-Zawahiri in Arabic With English Sub-Titles"

Jean-Pierre Milleli in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/28):
"There is nothing very new in the address from Al-Zawahiri,
except possibly the lack of comment on Iraq, just when
Zarqawi's troops are registering victory after victory. Maybe
this silence is an implicit disapproval of Zarqawi's 'total
war' against the Shiites? Which would explain why Al-Zawahiri
is calling on Iraq's Mujahidins to unite. What is also new is
the use of a specialized press agency whose name appears in
the broadcast and the fact that the declaration was subtitled
in English. This is a major change, considering the importance
of Arabic among Islamists. But Arabic is not easily understood
by all Muslims, especially in Asia and the West. Hence the use
of the English subtitles."

"NATO Committed in Iraq"

Arnaud de La Grange in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/28): "Finally, the Atlantic Alliance is raising its flag over Baghdad. Iraqi soldiers will be trained by NATO. in spite of residual opposition from certain countries, including France and Germany. Before the intervention in Iraq, Washington had officially asked for NATO's support, but the same countries, France and Germany had opposed the idea. These days France continues to offer help in training Iraqis, but outside Iraq. An offer that has not triggered much response. The Americans, while they do not oppose this form of training, are not urging their Iraqi protgs to rush outside of Iraq. America's
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clearly advertised interest is to have its allies coming to Iraq to help. Politically this approach also serves to prove the Americans are not alone."

Iran

"Iran Threatens India"

Maurin Picard in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/28): "Iran is threatening reprisal against the countries supporting the EU-3 resolution. The Iranian representative at the IAEA did not mince words when he spoke of the dangers of a confrontation at the UN. Even if his response was somewhat confused, his message is clearly addressed to Washington: Iran has the capacity to turn Iraq into an absolute hell for the GIs. As usual Tehran is sending out contradictory messages in order to confuse the issue. For the time being Iran's threats are just empty words considering that the crisis has not been taken from Vienna to New York."

Bush - Environmental Policy

"Bush, the Ecologist of Circumstance"

Pascal Riche in left-of-center Liberation (09/28): "The rising price of gas in the U.S. has led President Bush to make surprising recommendations. Has President Bush turned ecologist? Something is definitely wrong here. For the past weeks the U.S. administration has been at a loss. The rising cost of energy is politically devastating because in U.S. public opinion energy policy is tied to the government's Middle East policy. More than a third of the Americans disapprove the administration's energy policy. Concerned by this growing discontent, President Bush and his team have decided to slightly shift their energy policy approach. This new approach has somewhat surprised John Snow's counterparts who were in Washington for the G7. France's Thierry Breton indicated that the U.S. position meant that `for the first time we have harmonized views on energy conservation.'" STAPLETON